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ABSTRACT

A telephone survey of 500 adults in the San Diego, California, area was conducted to examine the role of mass media in shaping views of the respondents toward undocumented immigrants from Mexico. The sample, designed to reflect all adults in the area, was distorted somewhat by a refusal rate of approximately 30%. The results showed that the most significant contribution of media coverage concerning undocumented immigrants was to increase levels of information about Mexico and about the immigrants. Print media were found to have the greatest influence on increasing information, discussion was the next most influential, and television programing was the least influential. Although exposure to media was associated with level of information, the media apparently had no influence on the content of either perceptions or attitudes about immigrants. The findings suggest that the media increased both information and cognitive consistency in relation to undocumented immigrants, but did not change basic evaluations or perceptions about them. (FL)

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COMMUNICATION MEDIA AND PERCEPTIONS OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS: THE CASE OF SAN DIEGO

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COMMUNICATION MEDIA AND PERCEPTIONS OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS: THE CASE OF SAN DIEGO

I. BACKGROUND

During the last several years undocumented immigration from Mexico to the United States re-emerged as one of the latter nation's most complex and controversial domestic political issues. National, state and local policymakers debate the definition, scale, and solutions to the "problem" of "illegal immigrants." Notwithstanding the lack of any large-scale study of the impacts of undocumented immigration, increasing public clamor exists over the extent to which these immigrants displace domestic workers, place a drain on the American economy or burden local and state taxpayers with demands on public services. At the same time, however, employers who utilize these immigrants as laborers or service workers, certain Chicano/Mexican American groups and recent research point to the numerous benefits these people bring to the economy and society of the United States.

According to published estimates, the border area between Mexico and San Diego, California--and especially the San Diego-Tijuana interface--accounts for forty to fifty percent of all undocumented migration from Mexico to the United States. While it is well known that a large percentage of undocumented migrants do not remain in San Diego city or even San Diego county, there is a considerable (if not measured) presence of undocumented immigrants from the barrios of Southern San Diego county, coastal and inland towns and to the agricultural districts in northern San Diego county. Tiny barrios and "drop points" dot coastal and inland "North County."

Periodic exposés in the San Diego and regional print and broadcast media paint a grim picture of the living conditions of many of these undocumented immigrants. Hesitant to request protection by local or state law enforcement

agencies, harrassed by I N S--Border Patrol, and vulnerable to unscrupulous employers, these immigrants live in a Netherland as they seek to earn a living, send money home, and then return occasionally or permanently to their homeland.

This paper--part of a larger ongoing concern with the issues of undocumented immigration--examines the role of mass media in shaping selected views of citizens of San Diego toward undocumented immigration and undocumented immigrants; it attempts to explore the relationship between reported media exposure and the distribution of such attitudes among San Diego residents in a broader social context. Obviously, media exposure does not account by itself for the character or intensity of attitudes San Diego residents hold toward undocumented workers. Thus, the present paper is simply an effort to test the plausibility of certain theoretical structures regarding the effects of media exposure with reference to our data regarding citizen attitudes toward undocumented immigration and undocumented immigrants in the San Diego area.

II. Assumptions about Mass Media and Attitudes about Undocumented Immigrants

This study assumes the mass and interpersonal media create a perceptual environment in which beliefs, attitudes, and images about matters of public concern are formed. Individuals continuously winnow communication content in this environment, selecting certain aspects and rejecting others, and gradually come to form more or less concrete images partially based on their own experiences and partially based on manifest content of communication (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976: 9-18; McQuail, Blumber and Brown, 1969: 144; Kraus and Davis, 1976: 287-290).

The influences of mass media on the formation of images about public policy are assumed to be greater to the extent that matters of concern are otherwise ambiguous and distant from personal experience. The effects of mass media, according to this view, are diminished to the extent that matters of public concern are directly experienced by the public (McCombs, 1972: 179-181).

The uses which people make of the media also influence the way media content affects popular views. Information-seeking can be distinguished from entertainment and other uses to which mass media are put. Information-seeking is assumed to be directly related to levels of information and intellectual sophistication about public affairs (Tichenor, 1970: 160-162).

The kinds of media used are also assumed to be significant in assessing the influences on popular views about public affairs (Nimmo and Savage, 1976: 21-22; Hofstetter and Buss, in press). Print media, for instance, provide factually rich, relatively analytical material (Wade and Schramm, 1969: 202). Broadcast media (especially television) are more likely to raise levels of awareness about events (Weiss, 1969: 150-151), but to provide more superficial, ambiguous impressions and images (Nimmo and Savage, 1976: 99-100).

Selective exposure, moreover, is common among newspaper readers but probably less frequent among broadcast audiences, since advance knowledge of specific news material in broadcasts is usually absent (Sears and Friedman, 1972: 194-213). If one wishes to avoid a news story in a newspaper, one merely turns the page; but there is no effective way to avoid some news stories on television other than changing channels or turning off the television. This is usually accomplished after the fact due to the short duration of most news stories on television. Thus, television is likely to provide broader awareness but more superficial knowledge about issues, while newspapers are more likely to provide a narrower perspective, but knowledge of greater depth about most issues.

Life style considerations commonly influence the uses people make of mass communication. Educational attainment is one of the most important indicators of life style in the United States. Higher educational levels lead to greater interest in and exposure to public affairs concerns in mass and interpersonal media. Education also provides enhanced conceptual and cognotive skills to gain appreciation of public affairs and an enriched comprehension of social

concerns (Robinson and Converce, 1972).

Interest in public affairs, media exposure, and knowledge about public affairs are closely interrelated, albeit most likely in recursive ways (Atkin, Galloway, Mayman, 1976: 237). More interested persons seek information from the media; more informed persons develop interests in public affairs; and more informed persons use media more than others.

The preceeding assumptions are summarized in the following hypotheses regarding the relationship between use of media and views about undocumented immigrants.

H_1: The greater the exposure to mass media (of various forms), the greater the awareness that problems exist concerning undocumented immigration.

H_2: The greater the exposure to mass media, the higher the level of information about Mexico.

H_3: Exposure to print media produces greater increments in information about undocumented immigrants than exposure to television.

H_4: Use of each type of media to gain information about undocumented immigrants is related to level of education, interest in public affairs, and information.

H_5: Exposure to mass media is not related to specific attitudes about immigration and undocumented immigration to the United States. Exposure to media does, however, increase consistency among views about undocumented immigrants by reinforcing existing attitudes.

III. Method

Data.

Lengthy telephone interviews were conducted with 500 adults during late summer and early fall, 1979. Although a number of broader public policy items

were used in the survey, most interviewing focused on attitudes and beliefs about undocumented immigrants, and about respondents' uses of mass media.

The sample was designed to represent all adults in the larger San Diego, California, area who could be contacted by residential telephone (approximately 95 percent). Sampling was based on standard random-digit-dial procedures due to the very large number of residences with unlisted numbers (about 30 percent) and new listings.

Interviewing was conducted by a staff of trained interviewers employed by the survey unit at San Diego State University. The refusal rate among eligible respondents was approximately 30 percent, a number doubtlessly inflated to some extent by a heat spell during the most intensive phase of interviewing. All interviews were conducted in English, although several interviewers reported not having been able to complete an interview due to language problems.

The sample appears to represent the larger San Diego population fairly well. In comparison to data from the 1975 Census, the most recent population estimates available, sample estimates are somewhat higher on education and income. This is in accord with social trends during the years between the sample and the Census. Minorities, especially Mexican Americans, are under-represented in the sample, perhaps due to greater difficulty in contacting them by residential telephone.

Key Variables

An overall attitude about legal immigration was measured by asking respondents: "In general, do you think that the number of people allowed to immigrate to the United States should be increased, decreased, kept about the same as it is now, or haven't you given the matter much thought?" More specific attitudes about immigration from certain nations or areas were measured by asking: "Some people say immigration has positive effects on San Diego. Others say it has negative effects. How about you? Do you think that

immigration from Western Europe has had a positive effect, a slightly positive effect, a slightly negative effect, a negative effect, or no effect at all on San Diego?" Variations of the item were repeated for Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Mexico, and Canada.

Perceptions of "problems" caused by "illegal immigration" to the United States in general and from Mexico were measured by asking respondents to rate the "importance" of each as a problem. Open-ended items were asked to tap imagery and beliefs about undocumented immigrants from Mexico. These included: "What negative effects do illegal immigrants have on the way you live?" (asked of the 28 percent of the sample who asserted that the immigrants had some kind of negative effects ". . .on the way you live."), "Now, thinking more generally about San Diego, what would you say are the most important problems that illegal immigrants cause to San Diego?" (asked of all respondents), and "What are the most important benefits that San Diego gains from illegal immigrants?" (asked of all).

Respondents who said immigrants used services were also asked the following about services: "Which services do you believe illegal immigrants use most in San Diego?", "Have you personally heard of cases where illegal immigrants used public services in San Diego?", and among those who claimed to know personally of cases where illegal immigrants used services, "Which services were those?"

Standard media exposure items were used to measure general exposure to television, television news, newspapers, and to interpersonal discussion. More specific exposure items were also used to tap recall of exposure about "illegal immigration." These were: "During the last six months, about how many (newspaper stories/television programs/conversations) have you (read/seen/had) about illegal immigration from Mexico?" Respondents were also asked items in the same format ". . .about what happens to illegal immigrants from Mexico once they get into the United States?"

Information was measured in several ways. Aided recall items were employed

to measure information about Mexico, Baja California, Tijuana, Mexican nationals' expenditures in the United States, and estimates of the number of Mexicans and Latin Americans "caught on the average each day trying to enter the United States illegally in San Diego?"[1] Information was also measured by tabulating the number of responses to open-ended items concerning the good and bad effects of undocumented immigration to the United States noted above.

Finally, a series of standard socio-economic, demographic, and quality control items were asked during interviewing.

IV. General Findings

Immigration to the United States has periodically become a salient political issue. Coinciding with economic downturns, international political events or waves of xenophobia/racist political rhetoric, American policymakers have raised the issue of immigration policy to the public consciousness. While different "immigrants" have been the focus of the immigration policy debates, American immigration policy has typically discriminated against non-caucasian, non-European peoples. (See Konivitz, Milton R., 1946: 160-161 and passim.) This has been true not only at the level of national policy but also in certain of the American states. To illustrate, after California prohibited aliens (in 1913) the state attorney general declared: "The fundamental basis of all legislation upon this subject, state and federal, has been, and is, race undesirability . . . The simple and single question is, is the race desirable? . . ."

General Perceptions

United States immigration law, currently asks questions other than those of race desirability, including such criteria as professional skills, incomes, and intellectual abilities. However, in the data collected for this study of citizen attitudes in San Diego, a marked tendency existed to evaluate the effects of immigration <u>according to the source</u> of immigrants. When asked the question,

"In general, do you think that the number of people allowed to immigrate to the United States should be increased, decreased, kept about the same as it is now, or haven't you given the matter much thought?", almost half of the respondents believed immigration should be decreased--and over 70 percent believed it should be decreased or kept the same. Only 15 percent of respondents believed more immigration to the United States should be permitted.

However, when asked specifically about the effects on San Diego of immigration from particular world regions, some dramatic differences in perceptions emerged.

Table 1. Evaluations of the Effects of Immigration from Various Areas on San Diego by Immigrants' Origins

	Negative or Slightly Negative	None	Positive or Slightly Positive	DK/NA
Canada	11.8%	24.4%	47.8%	16.0%
Western Europe	16.6	19.6	48.8	15.0
Africa	21.6	26.0	29.2	23.2
Asia	35.8	9.0	40.0	15.2
Middle East	32.2	14.0	35.8	19.0
Latin America	30.6	12.0	36.8	20.6
Mexico	40.0	5.0	46.4	8.6

Perceptions of negative effects on San Diego are lowest for Canadian and Western European immigrants, and slightly higher for Africans. Immigrants from Latin America, the Middle East and Asia are perceived to have negative effects by over 30 percent of the respondents. While Mexico is obviously a part of Latin America, perceptions of the negative impact of Mexican immigration is substantially higher than for Latin American immigration more generally. To be noted, however, almost as many people believed that Mexican immigration has positive

effects (46.4%) as believed that Canadian or Western European immigration has positive effects. This is also true for immigrants from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Thus, the data do not support the notion of a universal rejection of non-caucasian immigrants or entirely negative perceptions of the effects of such immigration. Rather, there appears to be a significant segment of the population who oppose increased immigration and among this group the source of origin of immigrants is an important consideration. At the time of this study, Canadian and Western European immigrants were perceived as having the least negative effects on San Diego and Mexican immigrants as having the most negative effects.

To a certain extent, of course, these perceptions are influenced by the salience of the issue of illegal immigration to the United States and the degree to which such illegal immigration is perceived as largely consisting of Mexican immigration. When asked to indicate the importance of the problem of illegal immigration to the United States, over 85 percent of the respondents categorized illegal immigration as a "very important" or "important" problem. When asked where they believed most illegal immigrants came from, over 90 percent responded Mexico; and, over 86 percent of respondents believed that illegal immigration from Mexico is a "very important" or "important" problem in the United States. Thus, for people in San Diego, illegal immigration is a highly salient policy issue and that issue is associated to a large extent with undocumented workers from Mexico.

These general perceptions are related to specific beliefs about the "most important problems" that illegal immigrants cause for San Diego. Most frequently mentioned were the impact of undocumented workers on employment (over 40 percent of respondents), the cost of providing public services such as welfare, medical care or schooling (30 percent) and law enforcement problems (25 percent of respondents). Notwithstanding these general perceptions, when asked whether illegal immigrants from Mexico "have any negative effect on the way you live,"

only 28 percent replied affirmatively. Almost 70 percent of the adult public in San Diego believed that illegal immigrants did not create any negative impact on the way they lived. Those persons who believe that undocumented immigrants have a negative effect on the way they live, listed job competition, criminal activity, especially burglary, and increased costs of government to provide services to undocumented immigrants. In general, however, despite an overwhelming belief that illegal immigration is an important problem, the vast majority of respondents could think of no way in which such immigration affected negatively their own lives. Those who did identify effects in their own lives were concerned primarily with economic issues (jobs, cost of government) or security of property (burglary).

In contrast to the list of negative effects of illegal immigration, when asked what benefits San Diego gains from illegal immigrants, respondents mentioned very few. Over 50 percent of those queried mentioned "cheap labor," "doing work Americans won't do," or "necessary for agriculture." There is a clear recognition that undocumented immigrants are a valuable source of labor; most (over 90 percent) of respondents could think of no other benefit San Diego gained from undocumented immigrants. This was true despite recent feature stories in the Los Angeles Times and the San Diego newspapers documenting the large contribution of Mexican shoppers to the San Diego economy. In this sense the respondents seemed to perceive Mexican workers as little more than beasts of burden who, while serving valuable economic functions, generate unfortunate economic and social costs.

One important component of these costs perceived by respondents was the utilization of public services and facilities by undocumented immigrants. Over 70 percent of respondents believed that undocumented workers use many or some public services. Most frequently mentioned as services used by illegal immigrants were welfare (44 percent),[2] health and medical (47 percent), schools (22 percent), and transportation (18 percent). When asked whether they had personally heard of cases where illegal immigrants used public services in San Diego--less than

half responded affirmatively (47 percent); welfare, health and school facilities were most frequently cited by those with hearsay knowledge of service utilization by undocumented immigrants.

Interestingly, only 26 percent of the respondents claimed to personally know of a case in which illegal immigrants utilized public services. Welfare, health and medical facilities, schools and transportation were mentioned most frequently as services used by illegal immigrants by those respondents claiming to have personal knowledge on this subject.

Finally, although relatively few respondents claimed to know personally of cases in which illegal immigrants lived in their neighborhood or used public services, a majority of respondents believed that illegal immigration decreased job opportunities in San Diego (59 percent), decreased job opportunities for teenagers (58 percent) increased the level of crime in San Diego (57 percent), and increased the amount of taxes they paid (54 percent). Moreover, significant minorities of respondents believe that illegal immigrants decreased the availability of housing (34 percent) (even though 82 percent believed there was no effect in their neighborhood), decreased the availability of welfare benefits for citizens (35 percent), negatively affected the quality of health care available (29 percent), and negatively affected the quality of public education (34 percent), parks (29 percent), and transportation (18 percent) in San Diego. Some 28 percent of respondents also believed illegal immigrants helped to increase inflation.

In short, respondents in our sample tended to view illegal immigrants from Mexico as a valuable labor commodity who otherwise made little, if any, positive contribution to San Diego or to the United States. Indeed, the Mexican immigrant was generally perceived as a burden on the taxpayers, and a source of criminal activity. A significant minority of respondents even believed that undocumented Mexican immigrants contributed to inflation in San Diego and the United States.

Media Exposure.

Californians live in a media rich society, and respondents reported what appears to be an extremely large number of exposures in major media of communication to information about undocumented immigration. First of all, television was reported to be the ". . .most important source of information about illegal immigration to the United States from Mexico" by 40 percent of the respondents, and newspapers by an additional 35 percent. Both television and newspapers were mentioned as "second sources" by 33 percent of the sample after further probing.

San Diegans report having seen considerable coverage of undocumented immigrants in media. Over 48 percent, for instance, said they had read more than ten news stories about undocumented immigrants from Mexico during the six months prior to the interview. Over 30 percent reported exposure to more than ten television programs, and 43 percent said they had more than ten conversations during the time period about undocumented immigration.

San Diegans also reported considerable exposure to media about ". . .what happens to illegal immigrants from Mexico once they get into the United States." About 29 percent reported more than ten newspaper stories about what happens, while 21 percent reported having seen more than ten television programs about what happens to undocumented aliens in the United States. About 29 percent said they had conducted more than ten conversations about what happens.

Information Levels.

Respondents are moderately well-informed about Mexico, at least insofar as the aided recall items in the study provide a valid index of information levels. This is somewhat surprising in light of what some regard as low levels of information about American society.

Almost one respondent in three (33 percent) correctly stated that the population of Mexico was "about 60 million" (as opposed to 10, 30, or 100 million). More surprising was the fact that 79 percent correctly named Lopez

Portillo (as opposed to Montalban, Castro, or Chavez) as President of Mexico. Half the sample (50 percent) correctly named Roberto de la Madrid (as opposed to Brown, Chavez, or Ortega) as Governor of Baja California.

Slightly less than one respondent in three (31 percent) said that Tijuana's population is about 500,000 (as opposed to 10,000, 50,000, or 1 million). San Diego residents were much less likely to know the amount of money that shoppers from Mexico spend in local stores, despite numerous references in mass media. Only four percent correctly said about $200 million (as opposed to lesser amounts). In fact, Mexican nationals spend even larger sums in San Diego stores. About 44 percent, in contrast, were able to correctly report that about 1,000 illegal immigrants are caught on the average day entering the United States (as opposed to 100, 10,000, or 100,000).

Thus, it appears that San Diegans are reasonably well-informed about a number of aspects relating to Mexico and Mexican immigration to the United States. On the other hand, respondents apparently have no idea about the (legal) economic benefits of Mexican immigration to the United States.

V. Tests of Hypotheses

Awareness of Illegal Immigration.

The first hypothesis relates media exposure to awareness of illegal immigration as a problem. Awareness is measured in several ways. First, open-ended questions about negative effects illegal immigrants have on the way you live, the most important problems illegal immigrants cause San Diego, the most important benefits San Diego gains from illegal immigrants, the services illegal immigrants use most in San Diego, services respondents have personally heard of used by illegal immigrants, and personal knowledge of use of services by illegal immigrants.

Correlations between exposure to newspaper stories, television programs,

and conversations about illegal immigration and awareness measures are presented in Table 2. Conversation was most systematically related to awareness. Although correlations are significant in a statistical sense (at percentage of less than .05), relationships are not particularly strong.

Table 2. Relationships Between Media Exposure, Educational Attainment, and Holding Perceptions About Illegal Immigration.[a]

	Newspaper Stories	Television Programs	Conversations
Negative Effects Way Life	.01	.01	.18**
Problems Caused San Diego	.03	.06	.10*
Benefits Gained	.04	-.01	.08*
Mention Services Used	.09*	.08**	.16**
Personally Heard Services	.15**	.24**	.17**
Personally Know Services	.14**	.13**	.16**

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

a Numbers are product-moment correlations between media exposure, education, and dummy variables based on open-ended items. Respondents who gave any substantive response were coded "1". Others were coded "0" to form each dummy variable.

Mass media exposure through newspapers and television were, however, less consistently related to awareness. Exposure to coverage of illegal immigrants through neither newspapers nor television programs was related to awareness of negative effects and the way respondents live, problems caused San Diego, or benefits gained from immigrants. Coverage of illegal immigration by newspapers and television was, however, consistently related to perception, mention or personal knowledge of services used by illegals.

Awareness was also measured by counting the number of responses to the negative effects, problems, and benefits open-ended items (with appropriate

probes) for three responses. Exposure to content about illegal immigration through the medium of personal discussion produced the only consistent relationships with awareness as measured by the number of responses given to each open-ended question. Although none of the correlations involved much variance, all but one was significant at the .05 level. Neither television nor newspaper exposure was consistently related to awareness.

Reported exposure to newspaper and television coverage and to conversation about illegal immigrants was related to having heard about illegal immigrants' use of public services ($p<.01$). Similar relationships emerged when exposure to what happens to undocumented immigrants after they enter the United States through each medium was substituted for the other measures of exposure.

Informational Level.

A simple index of information was calculated by summing correct responses to each of the aided information items described in the method section. Media exposure to coverage of undocumented immigrants and what happens to them in the United States is consistently correlated with the level of information, as reported in Table 3.

Among those with no exposure to coverage of illegal immigrants in newspapers, only 9.5 percent scored high on information, while among those who reported having read more than ten stories 39.4 percent were high on information. The product-moment correlation between exposure and information was .34.

Exposure to television coverage and conversations about illegal immigration both increase level of information. But the correlation between viewing television and information was a scant .15, while the correlation between participation in discussion concerning illegal aliens and information was a somewhat more substantial .28.

Exposure to content concerning what happens to immigrants in the United States is also correlated consistently with level of information. Newspaper reading was correlated .25 with information, television viewing .13 with information,

and discussion .24 with level of information.

Table 3. Correlations Between Index of Information and Exposure to Selected Information.

Exposure to:		Information About Mexico: Low	Low-Medium	High-Medium	High	r
Newspaper Stories Read About Illegal Immigration:	0	47.6%	22.9%	20.0%	9.5%	
	1-2	39.5	22.2	18.5	19.8	
	3-10	24.7	20.5	21.9	32.9	
	10+	14.9	20.7	24.9	39.4	.34
Television Programs Viewed About Illegal Immigrants:	0	40.9	18.1	19.7	21.3	
	1-2	20.8	26.7	23.3	29.2	
	3-10	28.8	20.3	27.1	23.7	
	10+	21.6	20.6	22.2	35.6	.15
Conversations About Illegal Immigrants:	0	47.8	19.5	24.8	8.0	
	1-2	26.3	26.3	16.1	31.4	
	3-10	20.8	26.4	24.5	28.3	
	10+	18.5	18.5	24.1	38.9	.28
Newspaper Stories About What Happens to Immigrants:	0	38.0	23.4	21.2	17.4	
	1-2	27.1	19.4	20.2	33.3	
	3-10	34.1	17.1	24.4	24.4	
	10+	11.6	21.9	25.3	41.1	.25
Television Programs About What Happens to Immigrants:	0	34.4	19.6	20.1	25.8	
	1-2	22.4	24.5	23.1	30.1	
	3-10	34.1	24.4	24.4	17.1	
	10+	16.8	19.6	25.2	38.3	.13
Conversations About What Happens to Immigrants:	0	40.9	22.0	20.1	17.0	
	1-2	25.7	24.3	19.1	30.9	
	3-10	16.9	20.3	30.5	32.2	
	10+	17.8	18.5	24.7	39.0	.24
Total Television:	0-1 hours	19.3	20.0	25.9	34.8	
	2-3 hours	22.3	20.8	22.3	34.7	
	4-5 hours	35.3	24.7	21.3	18.7	-.18

In sharp contrast, indiscriminant exposure to television, measured in terms of the number of "total hours spent watching television on the average day," is inversely related to information. Among those who report watching one hour or less of television, 34.8 percent were categorized as high on information. Among

those who reported watching four or more hours of television, only 18.7 percent were categorized as high on information. The product-moment correlation between information and indiscriminant television viewing is -.18. Otherwise, no significant differences appeared.

Welfare, health care, schools, and transportation were services which respondents most frequently associated with undocumented aliens. This recurs whether the question focuses on perception of services used, personally having heard of services, or personal knowledge of services used. There were, however, no significant differences between those exposed to more and to less media about illegal immigrants.

Although media exposure appears to increase information, all media are not related to information to the same extent. Use of newspapers is much more highly correlated with information level than is use of television. Newspaper exposure is also more highly correlated with information than is discussion, although differences in correlations are much less. It is also important to note from Table 3 that indiscriminant exposure to television, "total television," is negatively correlated with level of information about undocumented immigrants.

Thus, media of communication comprise a major source of information about undocumented immigrants in San Diego. But the relationship is strongly dependent on the kind of media used. Print media, newspapers, appear to be most effective in dispersing information, and television programming much less effective. It is likely that discussions also are highly informative.

Media Exposure and Life Style.

Very crude indicators of life style were used in the study. Educational attainment, age, and political involvement were measured independently and then correlated with the various exposure measures. Most of the exposure measures relate to education, age, and political involvement as one might suppose, according to correlations reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlations between Education, Age, and Political Involvement, and Selected Media Exposure Variables.[a]

Exposure To:	Education	Age	Political Involvement
Total Television	-.30	.03	-.01
Television News (Network)	-.02	.24	.20
Local Television News	-.11	.21	.14
Public Affairs Programs on TV	-.00	.05	.13
Newspaper Stories about Public Affairs	.18	.04	.23
Conversations about Public Affairs	.20	.08	.28
Newspaper Studies about Immigrants	.18	.02	.21
Television Programs about Immigrants	.00	.07	.17
Conversations about Immigrants	.09	.05	.16
Newspapers about what Happens	.11	.08	.24
Television Programs about what Happens	-.03	.13	.20
Conversations about what Happens	.06	.06	.16

a Numbers are product-moment correlations between education, age, and political involvement and measures of exposure to mass media. Total television is a measure of the number of hours respondents reported watching "television" on an average day, while the two television news variables and public affairs programs were the relative frequency that respondents reported watching network and local newsprograms during the week. The remaining measures are explained in the preceding text.

Indiscriminant viewing of television (total television) has a strong negative correlation with education attainment, and very slight correlations with age and political involvement. Exposure to network news is very slightly negatively related to education, but exposure to network news increases markedly with increasing age and political involvement. This pattern is repeated where local television news programming is involved. Older and more politically involved persons are somewhat more likely to watch "programs about public affairs" on television, although there is absolutely no relationship between education and exposure to such programming in San Diego.

Increasing education is related to increased general exposure to newspaper coverage of public affairs and also to interpersonal discussion about public

affairs. Political involvement is even more closely related to such exposure. Very slight relationships between increasing age and exposure to public affairs through either newspapers or discussion appeared. Thus more highly educated, older, and more politically involved persons are more likely to be exposed to public affairs content through the various media, but this generalization is quite tentative for the television medium.

Exposure to television programming about illegal immigration and about what happens to illegal immigrants once they are in the United States is unrelated to education, and very slightly a positive function of increasing age. Political involvement, however, increases such exposure considerably.

Newspaper reading about illegal immigrants--both about them in general and about what happens to them once in the United States--is more strongly correlated with education. Age is also related to increased reading, but to a much reduced level. And political involvement is even more strongly associated with newspaper reading about illegal aliens than education.

The relationships between education, age, and political involvement and exposure to material about illegal immigrants in newspapers and interpersonal discussion mirror the relationships for newspapers. More educated, more involved, and (to a much reduced extent) older people are more likely to come in contact with information about illegal immigrants through these media.

In general, the three life style variables: age, education, and political involvement, produce somewhat different patterns of media use and exposure to information concerning undocumented immigrants. Increasing age is related to greater exposure to each kind of medium and to greater exposure regardless of content, although most relationships are quite weak. It is likely that senior citizens simply have more time to devote to leisure activities such as using the various forms of media.

Political involvement and educational attainment are most closely related to newspaper reading, although political involvement is also associated with

particularistic forms of television viewing which focus on public affairs kinds of programming (including programming about undocumented immigrants). The politically involved, but not the more educated, are more likely to follow public affairs on television as well as in the print media and in discussions.

It is important to note what appears to be a more subtle pattern underlying these correlations. People who use one medium about public affairs are more likely to be exposed to each form of content--including information about undocumented immigrants and what happens to them--in that medium. Correlations among the different kinds of exposure support this hypothesis. The correlations between watching public affairs television programming and exposure to television programs about illegal immigrants and what happens to illegal immigrants are .38 and .27, respectively. Correlations between exposure to public affairs in the newspaper and to stories about illegal immigrants and what happens to them (in newspaper stories) are .52 and .28, respectively. And correlations between discussions about public affairs and discussions about illegal immigrants and what happens to illegal immigrants are .47 and .40, respectively.

But exposure is also content-based to some extent. People who read about illegal aliens in newspapers are also more likely to see television programs about them (.45) and to discuss them (.34) than others. Persons who discuss illegal immigrants are more likely to see television programs about them (.34). A similar pattern is mirrored in content about what happens to illegal immigrants once they are in the United States. Newspaper exposure is correlated with television exposure (.33) and discussions (.27). Discussion is correlated with television viewing (.57).

Thus, it appears that information about undocumented immigrants is widely dispersed by the major media of communication in San Diego. However exposure levels vary considerably among social groups. More educated persons are more likely to be exposed to communication about undocumented immigrants, so are the more politically involved. And so too are the older citizens of the community,

if to a much lesser extent.

Media Exposure and Attitudes about Immigration.

We have assumed that media of communication function more to raise levels of awareness and to supply particular forms of information than to "mold" the substantive nature of attitudes. Indeed, a lengthy tradition of scientific inquiry suggests emphatically that new perceptions, images, and bits of information will be fit into existing views in ways that minimize conflict with existing attitudes. Since we assume that a border-community's attitudes about undocumented immigration are longstanding and rather well-established, the level of exposure to mass media was hypothesized not to be related to the nature of attitudes people hold about immigration, documented or otherwise.

Data in Table 5 support this hypothesis. Very little relationship between exposure to media of communication and perception of positive or negative effects of immigration from Mexico is apparent. Among those with little exposure to newspaper coverage of undocumented immigration, for example, 44 percent saw positive effects of immigration and 50 percent saw negative effects, while among those with very high exposure to newspaper coverage about undocumented immigration, 49 percent positive and 46 percent saw negative effects of immigration from Mexico. The product-moment correlation between the two items was -.01.

A slightly larger relationship between reported exposure to television and conversational media of communication and attitude about immigration did, however, appear. Those who reported greater exposure to information about illegal immigration through television programs or conversations were somewhat more likely to perceive negative effects of immigration from Mexico than those who were less exposed to these media. Product-moment correlations were .08 for television programs and .10 for conversations. Although the correlations are statistically significant (at $p<.05$), they of course explain very little variance in attitudes.

Table 5. Attitudes About the Effects of Immigration from Mexico as a Function of Media Exposure for Selected Media.

		Effects of Mexican Immigration			
Exposure:		Positive	None	Negative	r[a]
Newspaper Stories Read About Immigration from Mexico:	0	44.3%	5.7%	50.0%	
	1-2	54.8	8.2	37.0	
	3-10	60.3	8.2	33.8	
	10+	49.1	4.4	46.5	-.01
Television Programs About Immigration from Mexico:	0	56.8	3.6	39.6	
	1-2	52.8	4.6	42.6	
	3-10	52.6	10.5	36.8	
	10+	45.3	5.5	49.2	.08[b]
Conversations About Immigration from Mexico:	0	56.0	7.7	36.3	
	1-2	53.3	7.5	39.3	
	3-10	53.8	3.8	42.3	
	10+	46.4	3.9	49.8	.10[b]

[a] Product-moment correlations

[b] Significant $p<.05$

The hypothesis also suggests that a major effect of media exposure is to reinforce whatever attitude is held about a topic. One test of that assumption is to compare the correlation between a general attitude about immigration (in the present study the question of whether immigration should be allowed to increase, to decrease, or should be kept at the same level it is now), and a series of more specifically focused attitudes about the same general domain under different conditions. In this study, attitudes about the effects of immigration from various areas of the world were included, and form the indicators used. If respondents are broken down into high and low communication exposure groups, then correlations between general and specific attitudes about immigration should be greatest for the high exposure group according to the hypothesis.

Data in Table 6 indicate support for the hypothesis that media exposure tends to increase the consistency of attitudes about immigration. Among

respondents with high exposure to media, correlations between general attitudes (immigration in general) and specific attitudes (immigration, by source of origin) toward immigration are larger than for comparable correlations for respondents with low exposure to media.

Table 6. Attitudinal Constraint as a Function of Media Exposure for Selected Media.[a]

	Newspapers		Television		Conversations	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Western Europe	.24	.30	.26	.32	.25	.32
Asia	.42	.40	.39	.49	.36	.53
Africa	.47	.44	.44	.48	.43	.49
Latin America	.37	.45	.40	.47	.40	.46
Middle East	.34	.37	.39	.27	.36	.35
Mexico	.32	.42	.33	.52	.30	.53
Canada	.27	.35	.29	.38	.28	.37

[a] Numbers in the table are product-moment correlations between an overall evaluation of immigration and evaluations of the effects on San Diego that immigration from specific areas has. The first question was: "In general, do you think that the number of people allowed to immigrate to the U.S. should be increased, decreased, kept about the same as it is now, or haven't you given the matter much thought?" The set of questions relating to specific areas appearing in the left column above were prefaced by the introduction: "Some people say immigration has positive effects on San Diego. Others say it has negative effects. How about you? Do you think that immigration from . . . has had a positive effect, a slightly positive effect, a slightly negative effect, or no effect at all on San Diego?"

Correlations between the general and specific indicators for Mexico were .32 and .42 for low and high exposure to newspapers, .33 and .52 for low and high exposure to discussions. With regard to Latin America, the figures were .37 and .45 for low and high exposure to newspapers, .40 and .47 for low and high exposure to television programs, and .40 and .46 for low and high exposure to discussions.

Differences between correlations among high and low exposure conditions

appeared to be least for immigration from the Middle East, and differences in correlations were in the opposite direction predicted by the hypothesis for television and discussion media where the Middle East was concerned. It is possible that shifting attitudes associated with turmoil of a social, economic, and political kind may have disrupted attitudes about immigration from this general area. The other two exceptions to the hypothesis were very small in magnitude and occured as a function of newspaper exposure in relation to Asia and Africa. Correlations were, however, in the predicted direction for exposure to television and conversations for Asia and Africa. Immigration from Canada and Western Europe was correlated with general attitude toward immigration in the way hypothesized and in the same way as immigration from Mexico and Latin America.

Although exposure to media increases level of information and awareness (if only marginally) of illegal immigrants, exposure to media content does not significantly alter the substance of perceptions about undocumented immigrants. Table 7 presents the most frequent responses to questions about negative effects, problems, and benefits associated with illegal immigrants, and with services immigrants were perceived as using. Distributions are compared for high and low exposure to each type of media.

Crime, unemployment, and other economic concerns consistently were associated with undocumented immigrants, despite level of media exposure. Unemployment was viewed, for instance, consistently as the most frequent negative effect associated with immigrants. Crime and taxes are also mentioned frequently. But differences between those with high and low exposure to mass media are not significant.

Unemployment, crime, use of services, law enforcement, and welfare were mentioned as problems caused San Diego by illegal immigrants. Again, no significant differences appear between those with high and low exposure to television, newspaper, and conversational media.

Table 7. Perceptions of Effects of Illegal Immigration by Exposure to Newspapers, Television Programs, and Conversations about Immigration.[a]

	Newspapers		Television		Conversations	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Negative Effects of Illegal Immigrants on Way of Live (First Mention)						
Crime	12.1%	20.5%	16.3%	16.9%	14.3%	18.4%
Unemployment	36.4	24.7	33.8	25.4	33.3	27.6
Taxes	6.1	12.3	6.3	13.6	3.2	14.5
(Total)	(66)	(73)	(80)	(59)	(63)	(76)
	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
Most Important Problems Immigrants Cause San Diego (First Mention)						
Unemployment	34.2%	34.2%	35.7%	31.9%	34.9%	33.3%
Crime	11.0	10.8	10.6	11.4	8.8	13.5
Services	5.5	3.9	4.6	4.9	4.6	4.8
Law Enforcement	2.5	6.5	3.2	6.5	4.6	4.3
Welfare	8.9	5.2	6.0	8.6	5.4	9.2
(Total)	(237)	(231)	(283)	(185)	(261)	(207)
	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
Most Important Benefits Gained from Immigrants (First Mention)						33
Work Citizens Won't Do	13.2%	12.7%	10.0%	17.5%	13.3%	12.5%
Cheap Labor	43.8	39.4	47.3	32.8	41.9	41.3
Agriculture	6.0	4.5	4.7	6.2	5.2	5.3
Nothing	26.4	24.9	24.4	27.7	26.2	25.0
(Total)	(235)	(221)	(279)	(177)	(248)	(208)
	N.S.		$p<.05$		N.S.	
Services Illegal Immigrants Use Most in San Diego (First Mention)						
Welfare	43.5%	36.4%	39.0%	41.4%	44.8%	34.9%
Health Care	31.1	37.6	32.9	36.4	32.6	36.1
Schools	5.1	8.7	6.7	7.1	5.5	8.3
Transportation	14.7	11.0	15.2	9.3	13.8	11.8
(Total)	(177)	(173)	(210)	(140)	(181)	(169)
	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	

(Table 7 Continued on page 26)

Table 7. Continued

	Newspapers		Television		Conversations	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Personally Heard of Cases Where Illegal Immigrants Used Services (First Mention)						
Welfare	31.8%	30.4%	39.0%	41.4%	44.8%	34.9%
Health Care	41.8	44.0	41.0	45.1	40.2	45.8
Schools	10.0	12.0	12.3	9.7	10.3	11.9
Transportation	8.2	5.6	8.2	5.3	7.7	5.9
(Total)	(110)	(125)	(122)	(113)	(117)	(118)
	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	
Personally Know of Cases Where Illegal Immigrants Used Services (First Mention)						
Welfare	23.1%	27.6%	26.5%	25.0%	27.1%	24.6%
Health Care	30.8	38.2	26.5	45.0	32.2	37.7
Schools	17.3	10.5	13.2	13.3	13.6	13.0
Transportation	13.5	10.5	16.2	6.7	13.6	10.1
(Total)	(52)	(76)	(68)	(60)	(59)	(69)
	N.S.		N.S.		N.S.	

[a] Most common responses are presented in each section of the table. Percentages omitted (adding to 100 percent) are distributed across many diverse responses.

"Doing work American citizens will not do," "cheap labor," "agricultural labor," and "nothing," were most frequently mentioned as the most important benefits derived from illegal immigrants. Those with high exposure to television were somewhat more likely than other to mention "work citizens will not do" as a benefit. Low television users were more likely to mention "cheap labor."

Thus, media appear to increase the consistency among various general and specific attitudes toward immigration to a far greater extent than the media actually play a formulative role in shaping the nature of the attitudes. Exposure increases awareness, produces a strong stimulus to enhance information levels, but does not alter the nature of attitudes sharply.

Further Analysis of Information and Attitudes.

The indices measuring information about Mexico in addition to general and specific attitudes about immigration were regressed on measures of age, education, political involvement, and exposure to newspaper stories about undocumented immigrants, television programs about undocumented immigrants and conversations about undocumented immigrants. The regressions were performed in order to measure the relative independent contributions of each variable to variation in the dependent variables and to discern the extent to which the variables collectively explain variance. The standardized regression coefficients, regression coefficients, and multiple correlation coefficients are presented in Figure 1.

Standardized regression coefficients indicate the relative contribution of each independent variable to explaining variation in the dependent variable once the other independent variables have been controlled. The multiple correlation between information and the selected variables is .42. Exposure to newspaper stories about undocumented immigrants clearly makes the largest independent contribution to information. People who are exposed to more conversations and who have attained higher levels of education also are more knowledgeable about Mexico than others. Perhaps most interesting is the finding that television programming about undocumented immigrants contributes absolutely nothing independently to knowledge. The same is true of political involvement. It is also important to realize that each variable most likely contributes indirectly through relationships with newspaper reading and discussion. But there is no direct, independent effect of television or political involvement on information level.

The situation is quite different for the measures of general and specific attitudes about immigration. Media were hypothesized to contribute to information level, but do not necessarily determine attitudinal content (except by reinforcing existing attitudes). Scanning the standardized regression coefficients

shows that none of the media variables are significantly related to either general or specific measures of attitudes about immigration. Educational attainment makes a fairly substantial relative contribution to general attitude about immigration (the more educated favoring greater immigration). But none of the other variables are related in substantively or statistically significant ways. It is important to note in this regard that the multiple correlations for general and specific attitudes are a much reduced .22 and .15, respectively.

Unstandardized regression coefficients are used to compare differences in the contributions to variation (in the dependent variables) between regressions where different amounts of variation are present in the dependent variables. The unstandardized regression coefficients (in parentheses in Figure 1) suggests that education is considerably less important in explaining attitudes about immigration from Mexico than either of the other two measures. Newspaper exposure and discussion are more important in explaining information than the other variables, although discussion apparently explains some variation in general attitudes about immigration which newspaper exposure does not. It is interesting to note that television exposure is most strongly related to attitudes about specific immigration from Mexico in this regard, but the relationship is not statistically significant. Political involvement also follows the latter pattern.

Thus, it appears that media exposure, especially exposure to newspapers and discussion, are significantly related to level of information but not to specific attitudes people have about immigration. Although it is likely that television exposure and political involvement make indirect contributions to information, they have had only negligible direct contributions to make to information in this study. Educational attainment is also independently related to information and to a general attitude about immigration.

VI. Conclusion

In this study four hypotheses which related media exposure among mass publics to popular awareness, information levels, and perceptions and attitudes about undocumented immigrants from Mexico were tested. Based on a survey of 500 adult residents of the larger San Diego, California, area who could be reached by residential telephone, the study revealed support for each hypothesis, although support was not strong in a number of instances.

The most significant contribution of media coverage concerning undocumented immigrants was to increase levels of information about Mexico and about the immigrants. Print media were found to have the greatest influence on increasing information; discussion was next most influential; and television programming was least influential. Indeed, once other media and life style variables were controlled in regression analysis, exposure to public affairs programs on television about undocumented immigrants had no direct effect in raising information levels. It is, of course, plausible that television works in conjunction with other media in raising information levels, since correlations among exposure levels to each medium are positive.

Media exposure also enhanced some forms of awareness, although results of the analysis were neither consistent nor associations large. The modal perceptions of undocumented immigrants concerned economic costs and benefits that these people bring. Although exposure to media is associated with level of information, the media apparently have no influence on the content of either perceptions or attitudes about immigrants. Media exposure of each type is, however, clearly related to the consistency of general and specific attitudes about immigration. Thus media appear to increase both information and cognitive consistency in realtion to undocumented immigration, but media do not change basic evaluations or perceptions about them.

Figure 1. Regression of Information and Attitudes About Immigration Selected Variables.[a]

	Information About Mexico	General Immigration	Immigration From Mexico
Age	(.09) .06	(.02) .03	(.02) .01
Education	(.18) .13**	(-.18)-.21	(-.08)-.03
Newspaper Stories	(.26) .27**	(-.00)-.01	(-.10)-.06
TV Programs	(-.04)-.04	(-.02)-.03	(.14) .09
Conversations	(.18) .18**	(.04) .06	(.16) .10
Political Involvement	(.06) .04	(-.03)-.03	(-.15)-.05
R	.42	.22	.15

[a] Numbers in the Figure are standardized regression coefficients. Numbers in parentheses are non-standardized regression coefficients.

** Significant at the .05 level.

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NOTES

[1] Q.38 First of all, can you tell me the approximate size of the population in Mexico? Is it about 10 million, 30 million, 60 million, or closer to 100 million?

Q.39 Who is the current President of Mexico? Is it Louis Portillo, Ricardo Montalban, Fidel Castro, or Ceasar Chavez?

Q.40 Who is the current Governor of Baja California? Is it Jerry Brown, Ceasar Chavez, Roberto de la Madrid, or Jose Ortega?

Q.41 What is the population of Tijuana? Is it about 10 thousand, about 50 thousand, about 500 thousand, or about 1 million?

Q.42 Would you say that Mexican shoppers spend about $1 million, about $10 million, $50 million, $100 million, or about $200 million in San Diego each year?

Q.43 Can you tell me about how many Mexicans and other Latin Americans are caught on the average each day trying to get into the U.S. illegally in San Diego? Is it closer to 100, closer to 1000, closer to 10,000, or closer to 100,000?

[2] This belief contradicts the limited available research on this matter. The Domestic Council Committee Preliminary Report on Illegal Aliens (Dec. 1976: 199) suggests that substantial numbers (77%) of illegal immigrants payed social security taxes while only 1.5% used food stamps. 4% collected unemployment and 4.6% received free health care. Although these data were not necessarily reliable, they do contrast markedly with perceptions of San Diego citizens interviewed in our survey.